



James Hinton
September 2005,
a few days
before his
89th birthday.

JAMES HINTON (1915–2006)

George S. Hinton

Apartado 603
Saltillo, Coahuila 25000
MEXICO

Billie L. Turner

Plant Resources Center
University of Texas
Austin, Texas 78703, U.S.A.

James Hinton died on July 23, 2006 in his Rancho Aguililla, Galeana, Nuevo León. The last 20 years of his life he dedicated to writing novels and short stories. He took time off from writing to collect the flora of southeastern Nuevo León with occasional forays into Coahuila, Tamaulipas and, his last collecting trip, to far away Oaxaca when he was 81—it was his third trip to Oaxaca in two years, and he spent it botanizing in and about Quiexobra.

He liked most collecting up in the mountains and he has plants named for him in the highest mountains of Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Oaxaca, Michoacán and Guerrero.

James Hinton was born in Mexico City on September 24, 1915 to George B. Hinton and Emily Wattley. He was the third of three brothers. His mother died of tuberculosis when he was four. She believed in fasting to overcome any sickness but tuberculosis was not one that could be cured by it. James inherited this from his mother and fasted for various reasons throughout his life.

After his mother's death his father took his three sons to live in Cuernavaca where he visited them every week end. They grew up a wild bunch with the eldest, Howard E., master of the house. Listening to them after 50 years, Howard was a terror; this encouraged a close bond between James and his brother George that would last throughout their lives.

As soon as Howard was old enough he was sent to school in California where he studied entomology. After, his father then sent him to England to complete his studies. James and George were sent on a 10 day

long train trip to Vancouver, British Columbia, to study. They were 14 and 16. When they arrived they had to look for a school, room and board. James had terrible memories of having to play rugby in school, fond memories of canoeing along the coast of B. C. and in its rivers, and swimming in the ice cold sea. He entered a competition that made him the champion swimmer of Alberta. He loved swimming and would swim a kilometer a day whenever he was close to a swimming pool. He built one in Rancho Aguililla and claimed that over 50 years he had swam to Canada.

He had planned to study economics at university but was called back to Mexico by his father to help him collect plants. He spent five years collecting plants with his father. He estimated he'd made 25% of the G.B. Hinton collections in remote areas of Guerrero and Michoacán. He traveled thousands of kilometers on mule back and asked Dr. Epling to name a salvia for his mule Lenina, *Salvia leninae*. When he was 90 he could still remember far away names like Toro Muerto, Teotepec, Piedra Ancha, Atoyac, Tecpan and measure their distances in days on horse back. Many of his stories and novels, written in his old age, were set in the rural Mexico of long ago he remembered and loved so well.

He married Helen Hart in 1942 and stopped collecting plants; he needed a job that would sustain a family. He worked in Saltillo managing the guayulera and exploring for guayule. The job ended with the war. He then worked as a sales representative and later started various companies. On the side he had several ranches in Nuevo Leon, Michoacán and the State of Mexico. He started a turkey farm and a maguey plantation in the State of Mexico and planted melons in Aguililla, Michoacán. He planted wheat and then an apple orchard in Rancho Aguililla, Nuevo León.

After he left Saltillo he moved to Monterrey and eventually to Cuernavaca, where he lived for 30 years. One of the first modifications he made to the house he bought there was to build a swimming pool. He commuted to Mexico City where he had two companies, and spent much time on the road going to his farms in Nuevo León and Michoacán.

He was an avid hunter and an excellent shot. He delighted us with countless photographs of faraway places and with the stories associated with them. He always had horses and looked over his orchard on horseback, riding up and down the rows of trees, claiming it was the best way to inspect it. He loved mountain climbing. He summited Popocatepetl Ixtaccíhuatl many times. He climbed Orizaba alone, reaching the top at about 4 pm in late December, spending the longest night of his life on the mountain.

He was always building something. He renovated his house in Cuernavaca and put in a swimming pool. He built a house in his ranch in the State of Mexico and convinced his partners a drinking trough was needed for the cattle and had one built: 20 meters long, two meters wide and 1.5 meters deep—he, of course, used it for swimming. In Rancho Aguililla he built four houses an office and a herbarium, bringing in materials and masons from central Mexico.

He made a few collections in Coahuila in the 40s and in Cuernavaca in the 60s but he began collecting in earnest again in the vicinity of Rancho Aguililla in 1969. Instead of going hunting he went plant collecting. He continued the sequence of numbers they used in southwestern Mexico, beginning with 17,000.

He sent duplicates for identification to Dr. Rzedowski with whom he had collaborated on a biography of G.B. Hinton. Dr. Rzedowski suggested he send them to Dr. Billie Turner in TEX because he had a better collection for the area. Over the years James developed a close long friendship with Billie. Some 11,000 duplicates have been sent to Texas in the intervening years from which Dr. Turner and his colleagues described over 120 new species.

For all those years he had kept about 4,500 specimens from the collection of southwestern Mexico, including about 250 types. We kept a duplicate of our collections from northeastern Mexico so the herbarium now has more than 16,000 specimens. Of these nearly 370 are types, a total surpassed by few herbaria in Mexico.

Of all the new species he collected, James Hinton was perhaps most astonished by *Lupinus jaimehintonianus*. "Imagine," he would say to me, "a tree lupin!"

"Imagine," I'm thinking, "a James Hinton!"

—George S. Hinton

As noted in the above account, James (Jaime) Hinton died on Sunday afternoon 23 July 2006. When informed of his passing via email by his son George, I was overcome with a wonderful sadness, full of awe and, what else, envy: that the man could have lived such an extraordinary life, contributed so much to mankind, and to his beloved Mexico. Like his father too, I thought, the remarkable George B. Hinton (1882–1943) who lived an exemplary life, both as a citizen of Mexico, mining engineer and plant collector, this wonderfully documented by Hinton and Rzedowski (1972) in their extensive obit of the man.

And so it was that James Hinton became the embodiment of his father, no doubt through eons of genes passing through various phenotypes, both male and female, some better expressed than others. How else to communicate this than through the two paragraphs penned by Jaime himself (Hinton & Rzedowski 1972):

“[George] Hinton was born in London in 1882, one of four sons of Charles Howard Hinton, author and professor of mathematics, as well as novelist; and of Mary Everest Boole, also a mathematician and author. Hinton was the grandson of George Boole, now known as the inventor of computer mathematics. He was a nephew of George Everest, surveyor General of India, whose name was given to the world’s highest mountain. He was also a nephew of Mrs. Voynich, author, and of James Hinton, surgeon and author.

In 1889, at the age of seven, Hinton left England, never to return; his family went to live in Japan, where his father was a professor of mathematics at the University of Tokyo. After seven years in Japan, the Hintons emigrated to the United States, where Charles Howard Hinton taught mathematics at Princeton, and later worked as a mathematician in the Patent Office in Washington, D.C.”

Jaime’s father, George B. Hinton, was one of the most renowned plant collectors in Mexico over the past century. He instilled this interest early on in his son Jaime, so much so that, in spite of an extraordinary literary talent, Jaime remained an ardent plant collector to the end of his life, passing this preoccupation to his son George S., as documented in Hinton and Hinton (1995). Early on the Hintons assigned individual numbers to their assembled sheets, but Jaime became so enamored with his familial collecting genes that he decided, some years ago now, to number all of the ensuing plant collections with a family number: “Hinton et al.,” this to be the hallmark of all collections during his remaining life and thereafter, so long as the Hintons feel the urge to hike the outback and assemble plant collections for Man’s posterity.

As noted in the above, James Hinton had another full life, that of literature. Few people in the botanical community are aware that James was a prolific short story writer and novelist, this only alluded to in the above account by his son George. Indeed, George informed me that Jaime published at least 62 short stories between 1937 and 1941, four of these under the pseudonym Andres Mendoza. Most of these appeared in **Mexican Life**, a magazine published in Mexico, of which Jaime was an Associate Editor. During his tenure as editor, Jaime produced two novels, *Some Day Shall Be Tomorrow* and *Juan Caraveo*. In spite of several business ventures in Mexico City and elsewhere, James spent the last 20 years of his life mostly writing. Over this period he wrote 123 short stories, 22 of which were published in this or that magazine. These in addition to four novels: *Mandriagua* (ca. 620,000 words); *Flight of the Yaquis* (ca. 193,000 words); *Angela* (ca. 337,000 words); and *Requiem* (ca. 110,000 words). He also rewrote *Juan Caraveo*, and had this published in 2004.

I first met James Hinton at his Galeana residence some 20 years ago now. He impressed me mightily, so much so that I chronicled the occasion with a story of my own, this published in *Phytologia* (Turner 1993) from which the following excerpt is taken:

Jaime is a wiry, resilient man about 5 feet 10 inches tall with the gait of a western cowhand, what with his certain, unobtrusive, strides and his ambience of belonging to his particular territory. A Mexican citizen, but of British parents, green-eyed and graying at the temples, he first walked up to me wearing a large Tarascan sombrero and a wisp of a smile, extending his hand, “Prof. Turner, I assume,” eyeing my newly married wife Gayle (25 years younger than either of us) as if she might be a remarkable flower to be plucked precariously off some Mexican bluff given the odd discovery, wherever. Good sensible man, I thought, excellent tastes. And later, settling down as his guest at Rancho Aquililla, I marveled at his conversational abilities about plants, architecture, peoples, commerce, and world affairs. He was a consummate scholar and litterateur, and as to bearing he reminded me right off as a protagonist from one of John Huston’s westerns, “Treasure of the Sierra Madre,” perhaps. Whatever; I was enthralled. Later my wife said, “An attractive man, Jaime,” I knew then that his peripheral glances were properly catalogued.

At the time of my first encounter with Jaime, there was not the slightest hint from him that he possessed any literary abilities. Many years later he sent me a copy of issue 1, vol. 63, of the *Snowy Egret* (reportedly

the oldest Independent U.S. Journal of Nature Writing) in which Jaime recounts his perilous attempts to recapture his beloved mule Lenina and render vengeance upon the man who stole her. I urge the interested reader to peruse that well-written real-life story. It is as thrilling as anything put together by Hollywood, including the work of John Huston.

After reading this contribution, I briefly communicated my admiration of his persona, as expressed in the *Lenina* telling, and his talent as a writer. Thereupon James sent me copy of issue 14 of the magazine **HAPPY**, which contained a short story, *The Candidate*, which had been nominated by the editors of Happy for the 2000 Pushcart Prize. I do not know if his story was selected as the winner, but it would have received my vote.

Jaime's literary talent is well expressed in his unsolicited letter to me (Turner 1993). He clearly used that ability to his satisfaction, and others. What can't be forgotten, however, is his dedication to things botanical. He was keenly aware, I think, that his most meaningful contributions to mankind, and its future, beyond that of his genes reborn, were the botanical collections made by his extended family from the more remote parts of Mexico from which so many novelties were named, and continue to be, this alluded to humbly in Hinton (2000), from which the following is extracted, this an epilogue to his story *Lenina*:

A year later, I wrote to Dr. Carl Epling, the world specialist in the Labiat family, at the University of California, thanking him for naming a new salvia after me and asking him to name a new salvia in honor of Lenina. I'd ridden her four years after my father gave her to me, and he'd already used her three years himself. As I explained it to Dr. Epling, Lenina had taken part in the discovery of nearly all the twenty-four new species of salvias we'd collected in the Sierra Madre del Sur. I reminded Dr. Epling that he'd already named a *Salvia hintonii* for my father and a *Salvia jacobi* for me, adding that it was only just and right to have a new salvia carry Lenina's name down to posterity along with ours. Dr. Epling responded by describing *Salvia leninae*, in honor of my black mule, richly satisfying me for the wisp of immortality I'd thus gained for her....

While I lost touch with Dr. Epling after the war, I understand that he had some trouble over Lenina's salvia. In the Senator McCarthy days yet to come, it was believed for a time that Dr. Epling had named a new salvia in honor of Vladimir Ilych Lenin, the communist leader of Russia—until our correspondence clarified beyond doubt that he'd named the new salvia after my saddle mule Lenina.

I cant help but add as a footnote to the above account, that the Hintons probably hold a record for having the most species within a single plant genus named for their family, all of these in *Salvia*: *S. booleana* B.L. Turner (for George Boole Hinton, son of G.S. Hinton), *S. jacobi* Epling, *S. hintonii* Epling, *S. jaimehintoniana* B.L. Turner, *S. jorgehintoniana* Ramamoorthy, not to mention the salvia named for the mule Lenina!

—Billie L. Turner

REFERENCES

- HINTON, J. 2000. Lenina. *Snowy Egret* 63:24–40.
- HINTON, J. and G.S. HINTON. 1995. Checklist of Hinton's collections of the flora of south-central Nuevo Leon and adjacent Coahuila. *Acta Bot. Mexicana* 30:41–112.
- HINTON, J. and J. RZEDOWSKI. 1972. George B. Hinton, Collector of plants in southwestern Mexico. *J. Arnold Arbor.* 53:141–181.
- TURNER, B.L. 1993. Jaime Hinton: Letter from a rabid plant collector in Mexico. *Phytologia* 75:417–421.